



## **Contracting Authority: Milieukontakt Albania**

*Within the framework of the project “Cleaner rivers - Cleaner seas (RiverClean)*

EuropeAid/180788/DD/ACT/AL- Contract IPA III/2024/459-979

Support to civil society organizations in Albania in the fields of environment, culture, food safety and consumer protection

### **GUIDELINE FOR GRANT APPLICANTS**

Reference: 459-979 / RC10/2

Deadline for submitting the Application: 08.09.2025 by 16:30.

## Announcement

**This is an open call for full project proposals, where all required documents must be submitted together.**

All applications will undergo a single-stage evaluation process. First, the administrative compliance of the submitted application will be verified. Then, only proposals that are complete and meet all eligibility requirements will proceed to the qualitative evaluation phase. The eligibility check will be performed based on the supporting documents submitted with the full application and the declaration signed by the applicant. Applicants are strongly advised to carefully follow the instructions provided in the Call for Proposals to ensure completeness and compliance with the formal requirements.

The guidelines outlined in this document are intended to assist all applicants in preparing and submitting their applications correctly. The application package can be downloaded from the official website of Milieukontakt Albania [www.milieukontakt.org](http://www.milieukontakt.org), or can be requested by email at: [info@milieukontakt.org](mailto:info@milieukontakt.org).

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# 1. RIVERCLEAN – Strengthening civil society's contribution to plastic reduction and circular solutions in Albania's river basins

## 1.1 Background

Albania faces high levels of plastic waste pollution in its terrestrial environment and freshwaters, with direct impacts on ecosystems, public health and the local economy. The lack of implementation of existing standards, informal waste management, and the widespread use of inappropriate single-use plastic solutions have exacerbated the situation exponentially. In this context, the role of civil society is critical to drive systemic change through monitoring, awareness-raising and promoting sustainable solutions in the private and public sectors.

The “*RIVERCLEAN - Strengthening the contribution of civil society to plastic reduction and circular solutions in the Albanian river basins*” program was conceived as a comprehensive intervention to empower civil society organizations (CSOs) in Albania towards plastic reduction and the promotion of alternative solutions, with a focus on two of the most important river basins: Vjosa and Ishëm. One of the main mechanisms proposed and implemented by the program is **the HAPI Index (Honest Alternatives to Plastics Index)**, a practical tool for auditing and orienting the HoReCa sector towards real and sustainable solutions that replace single-use plastics. The program also combines community engagement through citizen science networks and the use of technology for data collection, aiming at a concrete impact on policy-making and behavior.

In this context, this call for proposals aims to support concrete initiatives by civil society organizations that contribute to the reduction of single-use plastics through engagement with local stakeholders, especially the HoReCa sector in the areas around the Ishëm and Vjosa rivers. Through the implementation of the HAPI Index (Honest Alternatives to Plastics Index), the call aims to promote sustainable alternatives to plastics, measure progress at the level of business practices and influence consumer behavior and local decision-making. This call for project proposals is the first of two calls foreseen within the framework of financial support for local civil society organizations as part of the RIVERCLEAN program and lays the foundations for building a functional network of non-governmental actors that contribute to the comprehensive management of plastic waste and the transition towards a circular economy in Albania.

The HAPI Methodology serves not only as a monitoring instrument but also as a structured pathway for engaging the HoReCa sector and local communities in identifying and adopting real alternatives to single-use plastics. By generating comparable data, raising awareness, and supporting behavioral change, it enables civil society actors to catalyze change from the ground up—concretely and measurably.

**This call for proposals is designed to translate the HAPI Methodology into action by supporting civil society-led initiatives in the Vjosa and Ishëm river basins that actively reduce plastic use, engage local stakeholders, and promote circular solutions tailored to the regional context.**

## 1.2 HAPI Methodology

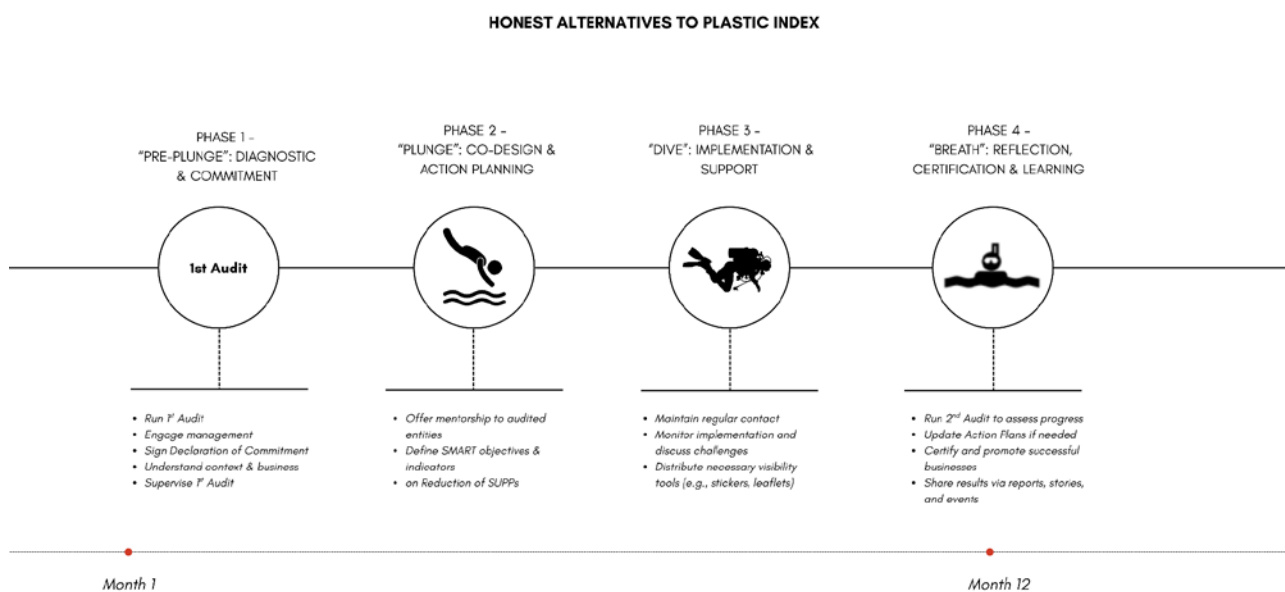
### 1.2.1 What is the HAPI Methodology and Why is it Used?

The **HAPI Methodology – Honest Alternatives to Plastic Index** – is a participatory, place-based, and evidence-driven approach to address the pervasive challenge of plastic pollution through locally tailored and citizen-engaged interventions. It is designed to identify, test, and promote alternatives to single-use plastics by fostering behavioral change, and systemic collaboration across the HORECA sector (hotels, restaurants, cafes), CSOs and consumers.

The methodology is built on the understanding that **sustainable solutions to plastic pollution must be locally grounded, context-sensitive, and participatory**, engaging a wide spectrum of actors from local government and civil society to the private sector and end users.

In the context of the RiverClean project, implemented in the **Vjosa and Ishëm river basins**, the HAPI methodology offers a structured process for mobilizing collective action, generating practical alternatives, and creating ownership over long-term environmental outcomes. These river basins face acute challenges of plastic pollution stemming from tourism, poor waste management systems, and limited awareness of viable plastic alternatives. HAPI directly addresses these challenges by focusing on locally rooted diagnostics and pilot actions that can be replicated or scaled up.

### 1.2.2 The Four Core Phases of the HAPI Methodology



#### Phase 1 - “PRE-PLUNGE”: Diagnostic & Commitment

**Objective:** Establish a robust foundation for action by understanding local Single Use Plastic Products usage patterns, engaging participating businesses, and securing formal commitment.

##### *Required Activities:*

- Conduct a 1st (baseline) audit of selected HORECA businesses using the standardized self-assessment tool.
- Organize the introductory session to present the LPZ initiative and the business case for SUPP reduction, highlighting environmental, economic, and reputational incentives.
- Identify existing alternative products and services available locally or nationally.
- Facilitate the signing of the Declaration of Commitment to the Low Plastic Zone initiative by participating businesses.

#### Phase 2 - “PLUNGE”: Co-Design & Action Planning

**Objective:** Jointly develop practical and measurable strategies for SUPP reduction, based on diagnostic findings and local feasibility.

### *Required Activities:*

- Facilitate mentorship sessions to review audit findings and co-design Action Plans.
- Define SMART objectives and corresponding Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) across three dimensions:
  - Environmental: % reduction in target SUPPs
  - Economic: % reduction in plastic-related expenses
  - Social: level of staff and customer engagement
- Draft and validate a SUPP Reduction/Prevention Action Plan for each participating business.

### Phase 3 - “DIVE”: Implementation & Support

*Objective:* Support the implementation of Action Plans, provide real-time guidance, and ensure progress toward defined objectives.

### *Required Activities:*

- Maintain regular contact with businesses through check-ins, troubleshooting, and feedback loops.
- Assist in preparing targeted communication materials to engage staff and customers and prevent greenwashing.
- Oversee the implementation of agreed actions, and help identify any emerging barriers or adjustments.
- Provide visibility tools (e.g., *Low Plastic Zone stickers, leaflets*) to promote business participation.

### Phase 4 - “BREATH”: Reflection, Certification & Learning

*Objective:* Evaluate outcomes, recognize progress, and promote successful practices for broader replication.

### *Required Activities:*

- Conduct a follow-up audit to assess progress against initial KPIs.
- Review and, if needed, adapt the Action Plan based on audit findings and business feedback.
- Award certification to successful businesses and facilitate knowledge-sharing (e.g., testimonials, public events).
- Document and disseminate results through public reports, storytelling, or visual campaigns.

### **Suggested indicators**

In line with the objectives of the RIVERCLEAN program and the strategic use of the HAPI (Honest Alternatives to Plastics Index) methodology, applicants are required to define how their proposed actions will be monitored and evaluated. To ensure consistency, transparency, and impact, each proposal must include measurable indicators that correspond to the four core dimensions of the HAPI Index: (1) reduction of single-use plastics, (2) behavioral change in the HoReCa sector, (3) public engagement and community awareness, and (4) the use of monitoring data to influence local practice. The list below provides a non-exhaustive set of suggested indicators. Applicants may use these or propose additional indicators, as long as they are relevant, measurable, and clearly aligned with the proposed intervention.

#### 1. Level of Single-Use Plastic Replacement

- Number and type of single-use plastic (SUP) items identified at the start of the intervention.
- Number and type of items successfully replaced with sustainable alternatives.

- % reduction of SUP items in the HoReCa premises assessed.

## 2. Business Engagement and Behavioral Change

- Number of HoReCa businesses participating in the HAPI assessment.
- Number of HoReCa businesses implementing suggested improvements.
- % of staff trained in plastic reduction practices.
- Visibility and communication of alternative practices within business premises (e.g., signage, menus).

## 3. Community Awareness and Public Involvement

- Number of awareness-raising activities implemented.
- Number of citizens, students, or young people engaged in educational or outreach activities.
- Number of local schools involved and type of actions taken.
- Use of HAPI results in public communication campaigns.

### 1.3 Relevance to this Call for Proposals

Applicants responding to this Call for Proposals are expected to apply the HAPI methodology as a guiding framework for their actions. Whether focused on tourism hotspots, urban neighborhoods, protected areas, or small businesses along the Vjosa and Ishëm river basins, proposed actions must reflect the four pillars outlined above—diagnostics, co-design, piloting, and reflection.

This means that successful proposals will not only aim to clean up plastic waste, but will also:

- Investigate its root causes and pathways;
- Collaborate with the local community to identify alternatives;
- Pilot real-life solutions within the economic and cultural context of the river areas;
- And finally, ensure that results are shared and potentially replicated.

Each successful proposal is expected to engage and **audit a minimum of 40 HORECA businesses** using the HAPI methodology.

### 1.4 Program objectives and priority areas

**The overall goal of this call for project proposals is:** To support the reduction of plastic pollution in Albania by empowering civil society organizations as actors that promote sustainable solutions and fair alternatives to single-use plastics, in line with the principles of the circular economy.

**The specific purpose of this call for project proposals is:** To strengthen the role of civil society organizations in identifying, promoting and implementing in practice fair alternatives to single-use plastics in the HoReCa sector in the Ishëm and Vjosa river basin areas, through the use of the HAPI Index.

**The priorities of this call are:**

1. **Implementing the HAPI Index in practice** – collecting data, auditing businesses in the HoReCa sector, and providing personalized guides for improving practices towards plastic reduction.
2. **Promoting sustainable alternatives to single-use plastics** – through information campaigns, awareness-raising activities, or structured collaborations with local actors that help businesses and the community make informed choices.

3. **Engaging local actors in environmentally responsible behavior** – including citizens, HoReCa sector employees, local institutions, young people, and schools – in initiatives that support reducing plastic use and increasing demand for fair alternatives.

### 1.5 Financial allocation by the contracting authority/ Fund available

The total amount made available under this call for project proposals is EUR 75,000.

The contracting authority reserves the right not to distribute all available funds if the necessary quality of the submitted project proposals is not ensured.

This call for proposals covers only Lot 1 – Implementation of the HAPI Index in cooperation with the HoReCa sector in the Ishmi and Vjosa river basins. In case the funds allocated to this lot cannot be used due to the insufficient number or unsatisfactory quality of applications received, the contracting authority reserves the right to reallocate the funds to another lot in the framework of a subsequent call.

### Grant Size

Any grant requested under this call for proposals must respect the following financial limits:

- **Minimum amount allowed for grant:** EUR 12,000
- **Maximum amount allowed per grant:** EUR 15,000

Each grant will cover **100% of the total eligible costs of the action.**

## 2. Rules for this Call for Project Proposals

These guidelines set out the rules for the submission, selection and implementation of actions/project proposals to be financed under this call for proposals, in accordance with **the Practical Guide to European Union External Aid Procedures (PRAG)**, which is applicable to this call.

The PRAG Guide is available online at:

<https://wikis.ec.europa.eu/display/ExactExternalWiki/ePRAG>

### 2.1 Eligibility/Eligibility Criteria

There are three sets of admissibility/admissibility criteria related to:

#### 2.1.1 Actors:

- **The lead applicant** (hereinafter referred to as the “applicant”), i.e. the entity submitting the application form;
- If any, his/her **co-applicants**;
- If any, **affiliated entities related** to the applicant or any co-applicants (unless otherwise specified, “applicant(s)” refers to both the lead applicant and its co-applicants).

#### 2.1.2 Actions:

- Types of actions for which a grant may be awarded under this call;

### 2.1.3 Eligibility of Applicants

To be eligible to receive a grant under this call, the applicant must:

- Be a legal entity;
- Be a non-profit organization (e.g. non-governmental organization, center, association, foundation);
- To be established and to exercise its activity in the territory of the Republic of Albania;
- Be directly responsible for the preparation and implementation of the project, in cooperation with co-applicants and/or affiliated entities (if any), and not act as an intermediary;
- Not be in any of the exclusion situations provided for in section 2.4 of the Practical Guide (PRAG).
- In any case, be without legal precedent in fraudulent or corrupt activities.
- In any case, not to be involved in religious activities;
- Not be a political group/party/entity;

#### Applications are welcome from:

- Civil society organizations with experience in environmental issues, sustainable development or community engagement;
- Community centers or youth organizations operating in the areas around the Ishëm and Vjosa rivers, registered as legal entities and fulfilling the eligibility criteria listed in section 2.1.1.

The applicant may apply individually or in collaboration with co-applicants. In case the grant is awarded, the applicant will be considered the main beneficiary, identified as the coordinator in the Contract.

The coordinator will be the sole interlocutor of the contracting authority and will represent all co-beneficiaries (if any), as well as coordinate the design and implementation of the project.

#### Co-applicant

Co-applicants participate in the design and implementation of the project, and the costs they incur are eligible in the same way as those of the main applicant itself.

Co-applicants must meet the same eligibility criteria that apply to the main applicant.

Co-applicants must sign the mandate in **Part B, Section 4** of the grant application form.

In case the grant is awarded to the project, the co-applicants (if any) will become **co-beneficiaries** of the project, together with the coordinator.

Each actor should only participate **in a single role** within a project. This is to avoid any potential conflict of interest and to guarantee a clear division of rights and obligations, as well as certainty regarding the acceptability of costs.

#### Eligible actions/activities: activities for which an application can be submitted

**Definition:** An action consists of a set of logically linked activities, which take place within a defined timeframe, in function of the objectives of this call.

**Duration:** The initial duration of an action must be from a minimum of 12 months to a maximum of 14 months.

**Location:** Actions should be developed on the territory of Albania, with a particular focus on the Ishmi and Vjosa river basin areas.

**Thematic area:** Actions should address the goal and priorities set out in section 1.2 of these guidelines, related to the reduction of single-use plastics and the promotion of sustainable alternatives in the HoReCa sector.

**Types of eligible actions (examples, non-exhaustive list):**

Applicants may propose different types of actions, as long as they contribute to the objectives of this call. Below is a non-exhaustive list of eligible actions:

- Initiatives that promote the replacement of single-use plastics with sustainable alternatives in restaurants, hotels, bars or other units of the HoReCa sector;
- Activities that implement or test the HAPI Index with local stakeholders, including self-assessment and reporting of business practices;
- Awareness campaign for consumers and clients in the areas around the Ishëm and Vjosa rivers to promote responsible behavior;
- Training and technical advice for HoReCa personnel on plastic waste management, hygiene, and green solutions;
- Activities that promote voluntary agreements or codes of conduct for plastic reduction;
- Collaborations with local authorities to integrate HAPI results into local policies or waste management plans;
- Actions that include monitoring and reporting progress at the microbusiness and community level.

**Ineligible activities for funding include (non-exhaustive list):**

- Individual sponsorships for participation in conferences or seminars;
- Support for political parties or related initiatives;
- Activities that are already funded by other EU programs;
- Purchase of land or buildings (except where it is essential and ownership is transferred);
- Activities that discriminate based on gender, sexual orientation, religious belief or ethnic origin;
- Activities that have started before the contract was signed.

**Applicability and promotion of EU funding**

Regardless of the nature of the activity, all applicants are obliged to take appropriate actions to ensure the visibility of the support provided by the European Union through the RIVERCLEAN project, in accordance with the communication and visibility guidelines.

**Number of applications and grants for applicants/affiliated entities**

- **The applicant** may submit **only one application** to this call for proposals, regardless of whether he/she applies as the lead applicant or as a co-applicant.
- **Each co-applicant** may only participate in one application under this call.
- **Affiliated entities**, if any, can only be included in one application in the same call.

In the event that an applicant, co-applicant or related entity is involved in more than one application, all relevant applications will be considered **ineligible**.

#### 2.1.4 What costs are allowed?

Only eligible costs can be covered by the grant. The budget submitted by applicants represents a general estimate of eligible costs, which will be considered during the evaluation and negotiation of the contract.

##### Categories of allowable costs

A cost is considered allowable if it meets all of the following conditions:

- is included in the approved project budget;
- it is necessary for the implementation of the action and is directly related to its activities;
- is completed during the project implementation period, as specified in the contract;
- is real, verifiable, and documented with invoices, contracts or other legal evidence;
- is in compliance with national legislation on taxes, social security and accounting rules;
- is reasonable, proportionate and justifiable in relation to the expected results of the project;
- It has not been funded or envisaged for funding from any other public or private source.

##### Ineligible costs

The following costs **will not be accepted** as eligible:

- VAT
- Loans and subsidies to third parties;
- Expenses declared and already financed by another public or private grant;
- Fines, penalties, legal sanctions and court costs;
- Customs, import tariffs and any other similar duties;
- Bank fees (except those related to the opening and maintenance of the dedicated project account);
- Foreign exchange expenses or losses related to changes in exchange rates;
- Depreciation costs for fixed assets;
- Debts and expenses for their processing;
- Interest on debts;
- Provisions for possible losses or unforeseen liabilities.

##### *About the Budget:*

Reimbursement of eligible costs will be based on the approved budget, specified in units and unit costs.

The Contracting Authority decides whether to accept the proposed amounts according to the initial budget submitted by the applicant, by analyzing the factual data of grants carried out by the applicant or from similar projects.

In 'Appendix B: Budget', "Justification of costs submitted", for each budget item, the applicant must:

- Describe the information and methods used to determine the unit cost, lump sum costs, *and* /or flat rates *of* the costs to which you refer;
- Clearly explain the formulas used to calculate the final allowable amounts.

#### 2.1.5 Ethics and Values

In order to ensure integrity, transparency, and accountability throughout the entire cycle of this call for proposals, all applicants and stakeholders involved must respect the highest ethical standards and commit to complying with the fundamental principles of the European Union and the relevant legal

rules. The following provisions are mandatory and form an integral part of the conditions of eligibility and implementation of the potential contract.

All applicants, co-applicants and affiliated entities must act in accordance with the highest ethical and legal standards during the preparation, submission and implementation of proposed projects.

### **Lack of conflict of interest**

The applicant must not be affected by any conflict of interest and must not have similar links with any other applicant or party involved in this call for proposals. Any attempt to obtain confidential information, to enter into illegal agreements with competitors, or to improperly influence the evaluation committee or the contracting authority will lead to immediate exclusion from the procedure and may entail disciplinary measures in accordance with the Financial Regulation in force.

### **Respect for environmental legislation and basic labor standards**

Applicants selected for funding must comply with national and international environmental protection legislation, including multilateral agreements for its protection, as well as with core labor standards, as defined by the International Labor Organization (ILO) Conventions, such as freedom of organization and collective bargaining, the elimination of forced labor and child labor.

### **Respect for the fundamental values of the European Union**

Applicants selected for funding must be committed to respecting the fundamental values of the EU, such as human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law, and human rights, including minority rights.

### **Zero tolerance for exploitation, abuse, and sexual harassment**

The European Commission applies a **"zero tolerance" policy** towards any inappropriate behaviour that undermines the professional integrity of applicants. Physical or psychological violence, threats, sexual exploitation, harassment, or other forms of intimidation are strictly prohibited.

### **Anti-corruption and anti-bribery**

Applicants must comply with all applicable laws and codes against corruption and bribery. The contracting authority reserves the right to suspend or cancel funding if corrupt practices are found at any stage of the selection procedure or during the implementation of the contract. This includes any offer of personal financial gain or assistance as a reward for any action or omission related to this call.

### **Unusual business expenses**

Applications will be excluded, or contracts cancelled, if it is found that the proposal or implementation of the project has been accompanied by **unusual commercial costs**, such as: unjustified commissions, payments to tax havens, or payments to fictitious companies. Grant beneficiaries found to have incurred these costs may be excluded from EU funding or future EU funds.

### **Breach of obligations, irregularities or fraud**

The contracting authority reserves the right to **suspend or cancel the procedure** if it turns out that it has been accompanied by significant breaches of obligations, irregularities or fraud. If these are found after the selection, the authority may refuse to conclude the contract.

## **2.2. How to apply and the procedures you must follow**

Applications for project proposals must be submitted in full compliance with the instructions of this Call for Proposals and prepared using the Application Form (Annex A).

Applicants must complete the application form in English and provide a summary in the Albanian language, as indicated in the application form.

Any error, major discrepancy or lack of information may result in the automatic rejection of the application.

Clarifications may be requested only if the information submitted is unclear and hinders an objective assessment by the contracting authority.

### **2.2.1. Supporting documents to be submitted**

To be considered valid, applications must be accompanied by the following supporting documents:

In the case of applicants who are legal entities (NGOs):

- Court registration decision (photocopy);
- Statute and Deed of Establishment of the organization (photocopy);
- Certificate of registration with the Tax Office (NIPT) (photocopy);
- Organization profile that reflects its experience in relevant fields (such as plastic pollution reduction, waste management, environmental monitoring, community initiatives, or other areas related to the goals of the Call).
- The organization's financial statements for the past year, stamped by the Regional Tax Directorate.

### **2.2.2. Submission of the application**

Applications must be submitted:

- in printed version (one original copy), and
- in electronic format (USB or CD), where the application must be identical to the printed version.

Both versions must be submitted in a sealed envelope to the following address, accompanied by the inscription:

“Not to be opened before the opening session – HAPI Call for Project Proposals”.

Full Mailing Address:

#### **Milieukontakt Albania**

Kodi Postar 1001

Rruga Xhoxhi Martini,

Pallati Teuta Konstruksion

Shkalla 3, Apartamenti 8

Tiranë, Shqipëri

### **2.2.3 Submission of the application**

The deadline for submitting applications is September 8, 2025, by 16:30. Any application submitted after the deadline will be automatically rejected.

## 2.3 Evaluation and Selection of Applications

All applications will be examined and evaluated by the Contracting Authority. They will be assessed according to the following steps and criteria. If during the examination of the application it turns out that the proposed action does not meet the eligibility criteria mentioned in Section 2.1, the application will be rejected on this basis alone.

### Step 1: Opening, Administrative Control

During this step, the following will be considered:

- If the proposal is submitted within the specified deadline. Otherwise, the application will be automatically rejected.
- If the proposal meets all the criteria set out in the checklist included in Section 2 of Part A of the application form. This also includes an assessment of the admissibility/allowability of the action. If any of the requested information is missing or incorrect, the application may be rejected on this basis alone and will not proceed to the further evaluation phase.

<i>Administrative Criteria</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Reviews</i>
1. The proposal was submitted within the deadline.			
2. The application has respected the required format.			
3. The proposal is in English (unless otherwise specified in specific sections).			
<i>Supporting Documents</i>	<i>Yes</i>	<i>No</i>	<i>Reviews</i>
The applicant legal entity (NGO) has submitted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Court registration decision (copy);</li><li>• Statute and Deed of Establishment of the organization (copy);</li><li>• Registration with the Tax Office (NIPT) (copy);</li><li>• Organizational Profile clearly demonstrating work experience as defined in section 2.2.1</li><li>• The organization's financial statement for the past year, stamped by the Regional Tax Directorate.</li><li>• Judicial Records Certificate (Dëshmi Penaliteti) for the legal representative</li></ul>			
<i>Budget, duration and number of applications</i>			
The total project budget is within the required limits.			
The project duration is from 12 months to 14 months.			
The Applicant has submitted only one application (either as an Applicant or as a Co-Applicant).			

The application evaluation process will proceed with applicants who have passed the administrative screening phase.

## Step 2: Qualitative Assessment

Proposals that pass this check will be evaluated based on **the quality** of the proposed action according to the matrix below.

Each proposal will receive a maximum score of **100 points**, according to the breakdown below.

The evaluation criteria are divided into categories and sub-units. Each sub-unit will receive a score from 1 to 5 points, according to the scale below:

- 1 = very weak;
- 2 = weak;
- 3 = average;
- 4 = good;
- 5 = very good.

**For criteria of higher importance, the same scale will apply, but the maximum score will be doubled (i.e., up to 10 points) to reflect their increased weight in the overall evaluation.**

Only Proposals that receive a minimum of 65 points will be considered for pre-selection.

Evaluation Criteria	Points	Assessment Criteria	Score (to be filled by Evaluator)
<b>1. Relevance (40)</b>			
1.1. Does the project address plastic pollution in the Vjosa and Ishëm river basins?	10	The action is focused on one or both river basins and provides a strong rationale.	
1.2. Does the project demonstrate understanding and application of the HAPI methodology?	10	The applicant shows clear knowledge of the HAPI Index and integrates it meaningfully into the project.	
1.3. Are the targeted groups (e.g., HoReCa, youth, schools) well defined and relevant?	5	Target groups are realistic and aligned with RIVERCLEAN objectives; inclusion of youth and schools is encouraged.	
1.4. Does the project contribute to reducing single-use plastics and promoting fair alternatives?	10	Clear interventions that foster change in behavior, systems, or practices related to plastic use.	
1.5. Does the action reflect local needs and stakeholders' participation?	5	Demonstrates stakeholder engagement and understanding of local dynamics, foreseeing the audit of at least 40 HORECA businesses.	

<b>2. Methodology (15)</b>			
2.1. Is the methodology realistic and well-articulated?	10	Activities are feasible, well-sequenced, and aligned with objectives.	
2.2. Does the methodology foresee engagement with local actors and ensure participation?	5	Involves relevant actors, particularly HoReCa and youth/schools, in a meaningful way.	
<b>3. Feasibility and Implementation (10)</b>			
3.1. Is the timeline realistic and appropriate?	5	Activities are scheduled logically over the grant duration.	
3.2. Are the roles of applicants and partners clearly described and appropriate?	5	Division of responsibilities is clear and practical.	
<b>4. Impact and Sustainability (10)</b>			
4.1. Are the expected results and impact clearly defined and measurable?	5	Outcomes are specific, measurable, and relevant to project goals.	
4.2. Is there a clear strategy for sustainability beyond project funding?	5	Includes follow-up plans, partnerships or systemic integration.	
<b>5. Visibility and Communication (5)</b>			
5.1. Are visibility actions well-integrated?	5	Plans to ensure visibility of the project and the EU contribution are clear and adequate.	
<b>6. Budget and Cost-Effectiveness (10)</b>			
6.1. Is the budget realistic and appropriate for the proposed activities?	5	Costs are justified and proportional to the proposed results.	
6.2. Are resources allocated efficiently and transparently?	5	No excessive costs; the budget shows financial coherence.	
<b>7. Financial and Operational Capacity (10)</b>			
7.1. Does the applicant demonstrate relevant experience?	5	Proven track record of implementing similar projects.	
7.2. Is the applicant capable of managing the proposed budget and activities?	5	Sufficient capacity in place to administer funds and deliver outcomes.	
<b>Total</b>	<b>100 points</b>		

**For objective reasons or for reasons beyond its control, the Contracting Authority may decide not to award any grant and cancel the Call for Proposals, without giving applicants any right of appeal or compensation.**

## **2.4 Notification of results and right to appeal**

All applicants will be notified in writing of the Contracting Authority's decision on the submitted application. The notification will be sent by e-mail and will include the application reference number, whether the application has been evaluated or not, and the relevant evaluation results.

Any applicant who believes that his/her application has been rejected as a result of a technical or procedural error during the evaluation process has the right to submit a written appeal within 5 (five) working days from the date of receipt of the notification of rejection. The appeal must be sent by email to the official project address. The Contracting Authority will review the appeal and provide a reasoned response within 5 (five) working days of receipt.

## **2.5 Signing contracts**

Before signing the contract, the Contracting Authority reserves the right to conduct technical and financial discussions or negotiations with the selected applicant in order to increase the efficiency of the project and ensure reasonable and justified costs.

After the completion of this process, the signing of the contract between the beneficiary applicant and the Contracting Authority will follow.

Any other changes to the selected applicant's proposal or negotiation thereof are prohibited.

## **2.6 Indicative Process Calendar**

<b>INDICATIVE PROCESS TIMETABLE</b>		
	<b>date</b>	<b>Time</b>
Public announcement of the Call for Project Proposals	June 30, 2025	12:00
Orientation Session no.1	July 21, 2025	
Orientation Session no. 2	July 25, 2025	
Orientation Session no. 3	July 29, 2025	
Deadline for submitting clarifying questions to the Contracting Authority	August 7, 2025	
Last date on which clarifications or updates are published by the Contracting Authority	August 18, 2025	
Deadline for submitting Applications	September 8, 2025	16:30
Informing applicants about the evaluation of the complete application	October 10, 2025	
Deadline available for appeal	October 17, 2025	
Grant award announcement	October 20, 2025	
Signing of Contracts	November 3, 2025	

### 3. DOCUMENTS TO BE COMPLETED AND SUBMITTED BY THE APPLICANT

- **ANNEX A** – *Grant Application Form* (Word format)
- **ANNEX B** – *Budget Proposal Form* (Excel format)
- **ANNEX C** – *Declaration on Honour on Exclusion and Selection Criteria* (signed by the applicant)
- **ANNEX D** – *Legal Entity Form*
- **ANNEX L** – *SEA-H Self-Assessment Questionnaire*

#### Supporting Documentation

- *Court registration decision (copy);*
- *Statute and Deed of Establishment of the organization (copy);*
- *Registration with the Tax Office (NIPT) (copy);*
- *Organizational Profile clearly demonstrating work experience as defined in section 2.2.1*
- *The organization's financial statements for the past year, stamped by the Regional Tax Directorate.*
- *Judicial Records Certificate (Dëshmi Penaliteti) for the legal representative*
- *CVs of Key Project Staff (for applicant and, if applicable, co-applicants)*